DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 882 RC 022 354

AUTHOR	Cates, Dennis L.; Smiley, Frederick M.
TITLE	"I Do It All": The Ballad of the Rural Special Education Teacher.
PUB DATE	2000-03-10
NOTE	7p.; In: Capitalizing on Leadership in Rural Special Education: Making a Difference for Children and Families. Conference Proceedings (Alexandria, VA, March 16-18, 2000); see RC 022 337.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Inclusive Schools; Mainstreaming; *Rural Schools; School Districts; School Surveys; Severe Disabilities; *Special Education Teachers; *Teacher Certification; Teacher Education; Teacher Shortage
IDENTIFIERS	Cameron University OK; *Oklahoma

ABSTRACT

Because extremely small rural districts in Oklahoma have limited resources and are not able to hire additional specialists, and because parents want education in local inclusive settings, most special education teachers in these districts serve students with disabilities for which they are not certified. A survey of school districts in Oklahoma with less than 11 people per square mile found that the number of special education teachers in these districts ranged from 0.2 to 7.0. Although 96 percent of these teachers held certificates in learning disabilities, mental retardation, or emotional disturbance, only 32 percent of them held certificates in all three areas. Forty percent of respondents had training in multiple disabilities and an additional 6 percent were completing their training. Many of these teachers stated "I do it all." Because certification has been categorical, these teachers have completed additional training to ensure that appropriate services are provided, even though certification across disability categories was not required for employment. Many teachers indicated that students with multiple or severe disabilities were served in inclusive settings. University teacher preparation programs should restructure their curricula and combine certificate programs to transcend categories. A special education teacher preparation program at Cameron University (Oklahoma) is described that provides a background in teaching methodology for all nonsensory disabilities except other health impairment, autism, and traumatic brain injury. Categories of special education certification in 17 states are listed. (Contains 10 references.) (TD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Judy Weyrauch
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

ED 439 882

Dennis L. Cates, Ed.D.
Frederick M. Smiley, Ph.D., Ed.D.
Department of Education
Cameron University
Lawton, OK 73505

"I DO IT ALL": THE BALLAD OF THE RURAL SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

Preparation of special educators to meet the needs of exceptional children in very small sparsely settled communities is a challenge to educators who are often expected to serve all children with special needs regardless of their certification. Teachers prepared to work with students with a particular disability or class of disabilities may also be called upon to also serve students with disabilities for which they are not certified. Although the hiring of uncertified teachers is universally frowned upon, many rural school districts are faced with the dilemma of meeting the needs of disabled children without the services of fully certified teachers. Some states have attempted to alleviate the problem by establishing certification in generic special education. Such certificates, however, may not require competencies in the education of students with severe to profound mental retardation or serious emotional disturbance. The purpose of this paper is to examine the makeup of the teaching force in selected extremely rural school districts who have been assigned to serve students with severe disabilities. Additionally, a discussion of the service needs of rural districts relative to these students will be undertaken. In conclusion, this paper discusses one teacher preparation program's attempt to prepare teachers for rural service will be provided.

Teacher Certification

Special education certification across the United States varies greatly as demonstrated by the following list of certificates offered by a sampling of states:

Arizona:
Cross-Categorical (completion of a teacher preparation program in special education which includes training in mild to moderate mental retardation, emotional disturbance, learning disabilities, and orthopedically/health impaired)
Specialized Special Education (completion of a teacher preparation in one of the following specialized areas: mental retardation, emotional disturbance, learning disabilities, or orthopedically/health impaired)
Severely and Profoundly Disabled (completion of a teacher preparation program in severe and profound disabilities)
Hearing Impaired
Visually Impaired
Speech Language Impaired
Early Childhood Special Education (Birth to 5 years of age)

California:
Education Specialist Instruction Credential in Special Education
Mild/Moderate Disabilities (specific learning disabilities, mild to moderate mental retardation, attention deficit disorders, attention deficit hyperactive disorders, serious emotional disturbance, K-12, adult through 22.
Moderate/Severe Disabilities (autism, deaf-blindness, moderate - severe mental retardation, multiple disabilities, serious emotional disturbance)
Visual Impairment (blindness, visual impairment and deaf-blindness)
Deaf and Hard of Hearing (deaf, hearing impaired, deaf-blindness)
Physical and Health Disabilities
Early Childhood Special Education

RC022354

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Colorado:
Special Education Endorsements
Teacher 1 (Moderate Needs)
Teacher 2 (Severe Needs - Cognitive, Affective, Vision, Hearing, (Communication)
Teacher 3 (Profound Needs)
Teacher 4 (Early Childhood Special Education)

Florida:
Exceptional Student Education Areas (K-12)
Emotionally Handicapped
Hearing Impaired
Mentally Handicapped
Physically Impaired
Specific Learning Disabilities
Speech Language Impairment-
Varying Exceptionalities
Visually Impaired

Hawaii:
Specialized Areas for Special Education (All grade levels)
Special Education Mild/Moderate (specific learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, mental retardation, early childhood)
Special Education Hearing Impaired (deaf, hard of hearing)
Special Education Deaf Blind
Special Education Severe/Profound (emotional disturbance, severely multiply handicapped, autistic, mental retardation)
Special Education Visually Impaired (partially sighted, blind)
Special Education Orthopedically Handicapped

Idaho:
Early Childhood Special Education Endorsement
Standard/Advanced Exceptional Child Certification and Related Endorsements
Generalist (Educationally Handicapped noncategorical; may teach in any K -12 special education setting)
Related endorsements (serious emotional disturbance, severe retardation, multiple handicaps, physical handicaps, early childhood special education, vocational special needs)

Kentucky:
Exceptional Children Primary - 12
Learning and behavior disorders
Moderate and severe disabilities
Hearing impairment
Visual impairment
Communication disorders
Learning Behavior Disorders (LBD all grades)

Missouri:
Certificates are required in the following areas:
Early Childhood Special Education
Blind/Partially Sighted K-12
Deaf/Hearing Impaired K-12
Mild/Moderate Disabilities K-12 (behavior disorders, learning disabilities, mental handicaps, orthopedic impairments)
Severely Developmentally Disabled K-12
Speech/Language Impairment

North Carolina: Certificates are required in the following areas:
Behaviorally/Emotionally Handicapped
Cross Categorical (mild-moderate handicaps)
Hearing Impaired
Mentally handicapped
Severely/Profoundly handicapped
Specific Learning Disabilities
Visual Impairment
Handicapped/Disadvantaged (Academic Employment Network, 2000)

Ohio: Provisional Special Education of the Handicapped K-12
Developmentally Handicapped
Hearing Handicapped
Multi-Handicapped
Orthopedically Handicapped
Severe Behavior Handicapped
Specific Learning Disabled
Visually Handicapped (Tryneski, 1996)

Oklahoma: Certificates or endorsements are required in the following areas:
Mild/Moderate Disabilities (learning disabilities, mild to moderate mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance)
Severe/Profound/Multiple Disabilities (severe to profound mental retardation, multiple disabilities, serious emotional disturbance, physical impairments)
Registry training is required in order to serve children with the following disabilities:
Autism
Traumatic Brain Injury
Other Health Impairment

Oregon: Special Education Endorsements
Handicapped Learner I
Handicapped Learner II
Severely Handicapped Learner
Speech Impaired
Visually Impaired
Hearing Impaired
Elementary

Rhode Island: Special Education
Early Childhood
Elementary and Middle School
Middle School/Secondary
Severe Profound Disabilities
Blind/Partially Sighted
Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Tennessee:	Special Education Endorsements Modified Program K-12 (for students with handicaps but who can participate in the regular curriculum with adaptations and supports) Comprehensive Program K-12 (for students with handicaps whose early focus may be on basic skills but whose later years will focus on vocational or independent living skills) Vision PreK-12 Hearing PreK-12 Speech/Language PreK-12 Preschool/Early Childhood PreK-1
Utah:	Special Education K-12 Mild/Moderate Learning and Behavior Problems Severe Learning and Behavior Problems Hearing Handicaps Visual Handicaps
Vermont:	Teacher of the Handicapped Essential Early Education Classroom or Home Program Intensive Special Education Classrooms or Multihandicapped Special Education Class Programs/Resource Teacher Programs Secondary Diversified Occupations Program
Wyoming:	K-12 Endorsements Exceptional Children generalist Behaviorally Disordered/Emotionally Disturbed Learning Disabled Mentally Retarded Hearing Impaired Vision Impaired (Tryneski, 1996)

Although several states have requirements for generic or cross-categorical certificates, many still maintain requirements for specific disabilities. The need for teachers who are able to provide support for a broad range of disabilities in rural communities may be thwarted by a continued emphasis on specialized certification requirements. Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank and Leal (1999) suggest that rural school districts face rather daunting challenges to the provision of educational services for students with severe to profound and multiple disabilities in least restrictive environments. Schools with limited resources, such as those in extremely small rural districts, may not have the luxury of utilizing the full continuum of services when implementing an IEP. Also, a district's philosophy relative to special education may relate directly to the availability of resources (Davis, Kilgo & Gamel-McCormick, 1998).

Cates and Smiley (1999) suggest that rural special education programs could benefit by subscribing to principles which include team teaching, use of distance learning and the internet, peer tutoring and Service Learning, student collaboration in extracurricular activities, maintenance of close contacts with the medical community, and integrating with the family support system. Although teachers and administrators may have good intentions, limited skills in multiple disabilities and severe to profound mental retardation could result in frustration and difficulty in following through with collaborative measures. The question of a small rural district's preparedness to provide services to children with severe disabilities in least restrictive settings hinges upon the teaching staff's ability to make the necessary accommodations to ensure access to the curriculum. Teacher preparedness is measured by an individual's ability to meet a state's certification requirements. If a rural district chooses to educate a student who is multiply disabled or is severely to profoundly mentally disabled, are

the special educators involved certified to provide appropriate intervention? This question is part of the research designed to examine the services being provided to children and youth with severe to profound mental retardation and multiple disabilities in extremely small rural school districts in Oklahoma. The authors of this paper have been involved in ongoing research to determine the nature of services being delivered to these students and possible solutions to the problems they face trying to comply with the spirit of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Rural Districts Attempt to Meet Needs

Given that students with multiple disabilities and severe to profound mental retardation have deficits in most areas of life functioning (Snell & Brown, 2000, Cipani & Spooner, 1994, Orelove & Sobsey, 1996), administrators in districts with limited resources might consider carefully the credentials of potential special educators. Because of the growth of interest in placing students with multiple disabilities and severe to profound mental retardation in inclusive settings (Lehr, 1996; Ferguson, Willis, & Meyer, 1996), rural districts have been faced with difficult decisions concerning least restrictive environment options.

As an extension of previous research involving school districts in the southwestern portion of Oklahoma, the authors of this paper queried school personnel in all of the school districts of Oklahoma which have a population density of less than eleven people per square mile. The number of special education teachers in these latter districts ranged from .2 to 7. The special education student population of the districts averaged 12.5%. Although some of the districts sent students with severe disabilities to neighboring school districts or special education cooperatives, most attempted to educate the students at home. Ninety-six percent of the special education teachers in these districts hold certificates in either learning disabilities, mental retardation, or emotional disturbance. Thirty-two percent of respondents hold certificates in learning disabilities, mental retardation, and emotional disturbance. Forty percent of the respondents had Registry training in multiple disabilities and an additional 6 percent were completing their training. Many of the teachers questioned stated, "I do it all." Because certification has been categorical, these teachers have had to complete additional training beyond their initial special education programs. Despite the fact that certification across disability categories was not required for employment in most districts, teachers have sought additional training in order to ensure that appropriate services are provided.

Many teachers indicated that services for students with multiple disabilities and severe to profound mental retardation are delivered in inclusive settings. Whether this is out of necessity or based upon a philosophy of inclusion was not ascertained. Most of these teachers suggested that a close community connection was an important aspect of their ability to serve these students appropriately. The initiative taken by special educators in these rural districts may serve as a stimulus for developing teacher preparation programs for other rural regions. To prepare teachers to meet the needs of all disabled students in extremely small rural districts, the authors of this paper believe university programs must reexamine the structure of their curricula which are based largely on categorical and semi-categorical formulae. Special education teachers with adequate preparation in all non-sensory disabilities are in great demand in Oklahoma. Addressing this need will mean combining certificate programs to transcend categories set by this state.

Teacher Preparation

The special education teacher preparation program at Cameron University is designed to prepare students to add endorsements in mild/moderate disabilities and severe/profound/multiple disabilities to elementary, early childhood, or secondary certificates. Students must complete 21 hours of coursework in addition to student teaching. In addition to courses in assessment, foundations, characteristics, and behavior management, students are required to complete teaching methodology courses in emotional disturbance, mild/moderate disabilities, and severe/profound/multiple disabilities. Following graduation, students may return and complete a practicum course in the certificate area in which they did not student teach. The philosophy of the faculty in the special education

program at Cameron is that students will be better prepared to serve as special education teachers in rural districts having been provided with a background in teaching methodology covering all non-sensory disabilities except other health impairment, autism, and traumatic brain injury.

Students who enter the program at Cameron recognize that the additional methods course will benefit them should they seek employment in one of the more rural districts. Although most of the students at Cameron are seeking certification in mild/moderate disabilities, they are rather enthusiastic about experiencing the full range of disabilities as part of their preparation.

Conclusion

The reality faced by most special education teachers in extremely small rural districts in Oklahoma is that they are likely to have to serve students with disabilities for which they are not certified. Because these districts have limited resources and are not able to hire additional specialists, and because parents are increasingly pushing for education in local inclusive settings, special education teachers must make decisions relative to their willingness to remain in under these conditions. A sizeable percentage of those who do enhance their ability to teach a wide variety of disabled students. Teacher preparation programs and state departments of education should not ignore this desire to improve. The authors conclude that an endorsement program in rural special education needs should be given strong consideration.

References

Academic Employment Network. (2000) Certification requirements state-by-state. [On-line], Available: http://www.academploy.com/certif.cfm.

Cates, D. & Smiley, F. (1999). Multiple disabilities: Is rural inclusion possible? In D. Montgomery (Ed.), 1999 Conference Proceedings Rural Special Education for the new millennium (pp. 408-412). Stillwater, OK: Oklahoma State University.

Cipani, E. & Spooner, F. (1994). Curricular and instructional approaches for persons with severe disabilities. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Davis, M.D., Kilgo, J. L., & Gamel-McCormick, M. (1998). Young children with special needs. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Ferguson, D., Willis, C., & Meyer, G. (1966). Widening the stream: Ways to think about including "exceptions" in schools. In Donna H. Lehr & Fredda Brown (Eds.) People with disabilities who challenge the system (pp. 99-126). Baltimore: Paul Brookes.

Lehr, D. (1996). The challenge of educating students with special health care needs. In Donna H. Lehr & Fredda Brown (Eds.) People with disabilities who challenge the system (pp. 59-77). Baltimore: Paul Brookes

Orelove, F. & Sobsey, D. (1996). Educating children with multiple disabilities: A transdisciplinary approach. Baltimore: Paul Brookes.

Snell, M. & Brown, F. (2000). Instruction of students with severe disabilities. Columbus: Merrill.

Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Shank, M., & Leal, D. (1999). Exceptional lives. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merrill.

Tryneski, J. (Ed.) (1996). Requirements for certification of teachers, counselors, librarians, administrators for elementary and secondary schools. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.